



Legislation Text

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Agenda Item Name:

SW 62nd Boulevard Connector Project, Countywide Wetland Protection Code Application

Presenter:

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Description:

In 2007, the FDOT and City of Gainesville commenced the planning evaluation of roadway alternatives to provide traffic congestion relief options to major transportation facilities including I-75, SW 34th Street, Archer Road, SW 20th Avenue and Newberry Road. Evaluations of 11 potential alternatives of various existing and potential new routes located between Newberry and Archer Roads resulted in selecting an alternative that will result in the construction of a new 1.1 mile-long, 2-lane roadway facility commencing at the western terminus of Clark Butler Boulevard and connecting near the intersection of SW 62nd Street and SW 20th Avenue. Referred to as the SW 62nd Boulevard Connector, this proposed alignment includes two wetland crossings that would result in a total of 3.6 acres of primary impacts (fill material) and 7.6 acres of secondary impacts (total 11.2 acres). To compensate for these impacts, the City of Gainesville Public Works Department (PWD) has proposed to fulfill regulatory wetland mitigation requirements by purchasing wetland mitigation credits from the Mill Creek Mitigation Bank. The PWD is also proposing to mitigate 1.1 acres of wetland buffer encroachment by cost-sharing with the City's Parks Department to conduct marsh habitat restoration and enhancement associated with the five-acre "Boardwalk Wetland" located at Gainesville's Bivens Arm Nature Park. Proposed construction of the Connector is scheduled to commence in the fall of 2022 and be completed in 2024.

Recommended Action:

The BOCC finds the proposed Connector project consistent with Section 77.20 requirements of the Countywide Wetland Protection Code and approves the proposed wetland and buffer impacts contingent upon the City satisfying the mitigation requirements outlined in the submitted Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Plan.

Prior Board Motions:

N/A

Fiscal Consideration:

N/A

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

Even though the planning phase for a proposed facility commenced in 2007, preliminary evaluations for potential alternatives to relieve traffic congestion in the area date back prior to 2000. During the intervening two decades, the area between Archer and Newberry Roads and east of I-75 has developed into a high density of residential and apartment communities, as well as commercial businesses associated with Butler Plaza. In fact, within the project vicinity, the only two remaining undeveloped areas associated with the 11 evaluated alternatives would both require roadway crossings of the Hogtown Creek floodplain. Of the two, the selected alignment would have substantially less wetland encroachment compared to the alternative (expansion of SW 20th Avenue).

Without appropriate wetland mitigation options within proximity of the proposed Connector or potential habitat improvements within public lands owned by the City of Gainesville, for various reasons referenced in the PWD's *Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation Plan*, the PWD selected the Mill Creek Mitigation Bank to fulfill the wetland mitigation criteria as required by the CWPC as well as the permitting requirements of the SJRWMD. However, a feasibility study at the City's Bivens Arm Nature Park did result in determining the five-acre "Boardwalk Wetland" could receive marsh restoration and enhancement options. This activity wouldn't be sufficient to fulfill wetland mitigation credit for the SJRWMD or the CWPC, however has been evaluated to provide appropriate mitigation for the 1.1 acres of proposed wetland buffer encroachment associated with the Connector. As a result, in a joint venture and cost-share arrangement between City's PWD and Parks Department, improvements to this wetland has been proposed to provide mitigation for the buffer encroachment associated with the Connector. In the event the necessary detailed engineering evaluation for the improvement design determines the restoration cannot proceed, the PWD has proposed a contingency buffer mitigation option by distributing the designated \$100,000 cost-share funds toward Alachua County's Environmental Sensitive Lands Funds. The proposed wetland and buffer mitigation and contingency option will be documented in an Inter-Local Agreement between the COG-PWD and Alachua County.

Staff believe the proposed Connector, proposed wetland and buffer impacts and associated wetland and buffer mitigation options are justified and appropriately achieve the public interest requirements of Chapter 77, Countywide Wetland Protection Code.